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**NEWS**

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## **TAHOE HOSTS SNOW SCHOOL TO TEACH SAMPLING—AND SURVIVAL**

DAVIS, Calif., Jan 5, 2001—Water predictions in the west begin with accurate snow sampling, which in turn requires a mix of science and survival savvy. Scientists, engineers and technicians from 12 western states will convene in Tahoe City's Granlibaaken from Jan. 8-12 for training in snow sampling, avalanche recognition, outdoor emergency care and other skills.

The training also includes an overnight snow bivouac on Wednesday, Jan. 10 when each of the 30 participants will be required to ski to a typical sampling site, build a habitable snow hut and spend the night in it. "Accurate snow sampling sometimes needs to be done in some pretty remote locations," says school coordinator Garry Schaefer. "It is rare, but occasionally snow samplers get caught in the elements and have to hole in and wait for help. It's a possibility we must recognize and prepare for."

The snow school is part of a cooperative effort to predict water supplies based on snowpack and other hydrometeorologic conditions. The school is conducted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. NRCS also heads the national Cooperative Snow Survey and water supply forecasting program in the 12 western states, except for California, where the state's Department of Water Resources heads the program.

Scientific snow sampling in the western United States began in Lake Tahoe's Mt. Rose in 1906, through the efforts of Dr. James Church of the University of Nevada. Church pioneered methods for measuring the depth and weight of the snow and developing forecasts for water users.

Modern forecasts have improved upon Church's methods by complementing manual data collection with 620 automated SNOTEL (snow pack telemetry forecast) stations throughout the west. These stations monitor precipitation data and make it available on a daily basis to those who model stream flow and forecast water availability.

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**MEDIA NOTE:** Media are invited to any portion of the snow survey school. The overnight ski bivouac on Wednesday, Jan. 10—in ski huts the participants will build themselves—may be of particular interest. Please make arrangements with Anita Brown at (530) 792-5644.